

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:33 p.m. at the Portuguese Social Club. In his remarks, he referred to congressional candidate Patrick Ken-

nedy, Mayor Robert E. Metivier of Pawtucket, and gubernatorial candidate Myrth York.

Interview With Diane Stern of WBZ Radio, Boston, Massachusetts

November 2, 1994

Ms. Stern. The President joins me live on WBZ News Radio. And welcome, Mr. President. If we could get right to the questions, we'd appreciate it.

The President. Great. It's nice to hear your voice.

White House Attack

Ms. Stern. The man who allegedly shot at the White House was in court today, as you know. He may soon be indicted on charges that he tried to kill you. I'd like to know, how do you talk to your daughter about that?

The President. Well, I think my daughter is well aware of the requirements of the office and that a lot of it involves the Secret Service. But I have to tell you, I think they do a good job. I was not in any danger, and I think this matter is being handled in the appropriate way.

Moral Guidance for Youth

Ms. Stern. We're talking live to President Clinton on WBZ News Radio 1030. Mr. President, as a parent, I'm concerned about what seems to be a moral decline in this country. Do you share those concerns?

The President. Of course I do. I'm especially concerned that so many of our young children are being raised, in effect, in a vacuum where they're so vulnerable to gangs and guns and violence and drugs and where they don't have enough people to look up to and enough people to follow. And they're not being taught right from wrong on a daily basis. I think we have to work on all those things.

One of the things that I've tried hard to do as President is to emphasize the importance of parents and churches and community groups taking responsibility for these children again. And one of the things that I liked about our crime bill was that we enabled church groups and others to apply for assistance to reach out to more of these young people. You know, every child is going to have somebody that he or she

looks up to. It needs to be the right person; it needs to be somebody who has a sustained and caring relationship with the child over a long period of time. It ought to be the parents, but if it can't be, it has to be someone else. That's the only way to turn this around.

Midterm Elections

Ms. Stern. Mr. President, if we could get on to the campaign trail, campaign '94, as you know, you're not welcomed by some Democrats campaigning for election this year. Personally, how does that make you feel?

The President. Well, most elections are decided on the merits within each State. You know, when I was a Governor, I never had the President come and campaign for me, even when the President was a member of my own party and was popular, because I thought that the voters were discriminating about that. But I do think there are some national elements to this election. And particularly in a lot of these races for Congress and Senate, I'm pleased to go where I've been asked to go—I've been asked to go more places than I can—to try to say what the stakes are in this election. And they are national.

You know, the fact is that in the last 21 months, while we haven't solved all the problems in the country and while a lot of ordinary Americans still have difficulties, the country is in better shape than it was. We've got more jobs. The deficit is coming down. We're doing more for families and children. And educational opportunities have been increased. The tax system is fair. The nuclear threat is less. There's more trade in the world. There's more peace, more democracy in the world. We're moving in the right direction at home and abroad. And the voters need to go forward, not back to the easy promises of the eighties.

You know, I knew when I took this job, if I really tried to change things I'd have to shake some things up; I wouldn't always be popular.

I wouldn't always be popular everywhere in the country and certainly not when people didn't know what had been done. So my job is simply to go out in this last week and tell people what's been done, what the stakes are, what the challenges are ahead and let them make up their own minds.

Ms. Stern. President Clinton—we're talking live with the President on WBZ News Radio—what is your take on last week's endorsement of Mario Cuomo by New York GOP Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, and could you see yourself ever going out on a limb like that, backing a Republican?

The President. Well, I think he did it as an act of statesmanship. I think that Mayor Giuliani saw himself as an American first, a representative of the people of New York, and then a Republican. And he thought that Governor Cuomo would be better for the people of New York City than the policies advocated by Mr. Pataki and his sponsor, Senator D'Amato. I really respect what he did. I think it had to do with what was best for ordinary New Yorkers. I think that's the reason that the mayor of Los Angeles endorsed a Democratic Senator, Senator Feinstein. I think you're seeing a lot of that around the country today as people get worried about the extreme nature of a lot of the Republican campaigns and how divorced they are from the real concerns of ordinary Americans. So obviously I liked it, but I also believe it was an act of statesmanship.

Q. Could you envision yourself ever backing a Republican, especially considering the remarks today to Black Entertainment Television calling them far rightwingers, extreme?

The President. I didn't say they all were. I didn't say they all were. I said their congressional leadership had advocated principles that were extreme rightwing, and they have. Oh sure, under the right circumstances, if I were President and we had the equivalent of Oliver North running in the Democratic Party against a responsible Republican alternative, I believe I would do just what President Reagan and Mrs. Reagan have done in Virginia. I certainly do believe that.

President's Priorities

Ms. Stern. I know we're running short on time, but Newsweek magazine, you may have seen, gathered a focus group of voters who,

rather than being angry with your administration, say they are disappointed. Now, how might you change your agenda the next 2 years, based on what you have and have not accomplished so far?

The President. Well, I'm going to try to do what we haven't done yet. I'm going to try to get the Congress to pass welfare reform. I'm going to take another run at health care. We've got to find a way to protect the health insurance of people; a million more Americans lost it last year. I'm going to take another run at campaign finance reform and at lobbying reform and at some of the environmental measures that we need so badly.

But the most important thing I've got to do is to figure out a way to communicate with the American people better. I mean, all the evidence is that the American people basically do not know, for example, that the last 2 years our administration was only the third one since World War II in which Congress approved more than 80 percent of the measures that I recommended, that it included family and medical leave for working families and tax credits for working families with children who are just above the poverty line and immunization of all children under 2 by 1996 and an expansion of Head Start and a big expansion of more affordable college loans for middle class families; that if they did know these things they would have a totally different attitude. So, I really liked the Newsweek poll—focus group—because it showed what I think, which is that the American people, I think, if they knew what I had done and if they knew what we have achieved and if they knew where we were going, I think they'd feel better.

I have to do a better job of finding a way to communicate directly with people in an atmosphere which is overwhelmingly dominated by controversy, conflict, failure, combative communication, and just talk straight to the folks. I've given a lot of thought to it; it's a great challenge. But in a democracy, even if you do something, if people don't know it, it doesn't quite register until they begin personally to benefit.

Ms. Stern. Mr. President, the campaign trail is beckoning, I'm sure. And thank you for joining us on WBZ News Radio here in Boston.

The President. Thank you. I enjoyed it.

Ms. Stern. Let's do it again.

The President. Goodbye.

Note: The interview began at 4:42 p.m. The President spoke by telephone from the Rhode Island Convention Center in Providence, RI.

Interview With WDIA Radio, Memphis, Tennessee

November 2, 1994

Q. WDIA here in Memphis, Tennessee. We have President Bill Clinton live and on the radio with you.

Good afternoon, Mr. President.

The President. Good afternoon. How are you?

Q. I'm just fine, thank you.

Q. W.C. Brown is joining me here, and we're glad that you're joining us here by phone in Memphis. And we have a few questions we'd like to ask you, but first we'd like to give you an opportunity to make a statement.

Midterm Elections

The President. Well, first, it's good to be talking with you and to have a chance to visit with you so close to this election. The message I want to get out is that with all of our challenges in America, we're in better shape than we were 21 months ago. We're rebuilding the economy. We have more jobs; we have a lower unemployment rate; we've got more high-wage jobs coming into the economy. We're doing things for ordinary American families: the Family and Medical Leave Act, tax breaks for 15 million working families to keep them out of poverty, immunization for our children, more Head Start. We're doing things to support education: expanded college loans and apprenticeship programs for young people who don't go on to college. We've supported African-American educational programs especially strongly, and we'll continue to do that. We've supported the kinds of things that will move this country forward. We've taken steps to help communities deal with the crime problem, not just with more police and the Brady bill, the assault weapons ban but also with prevention programs for our communities so that we can help our young people live a more positive life. So we're moving in the right direction.

The Republicans offer a contract that would take us back to the trickle-down Reaganomics era of the 1980's where we explode the deficit, move our jobs overseas, and have the risk of

big cuts in programs that are important to all Americans, like Medicare and Social Security. We need to keep going forward; we don't want to go back. In order to do that, in a place like Tennessee where there are so many important elections—two Senate races, all the Congress races, a big Governor's race—it's important that people go out and vote next Tuesday.

Anticrime Legislation

Q. That's very true, Mr. President. The crime bill is an issue that we talk here on the talk show programs and in the news all the time about. A lot of people are concerned about the amount of money that's earmarked for the Midsouth area, the Memphis Midsouth area, as well as whether or not the crime bill is really going to be something that can be effective here in the Midsouth or whether it's just another Band-Aid. What would you say to that?

The President. I think it depends upon what the people at the local community do with it.

Q. Okay.

The President. It is the best crime bill, in my judgment, that has been passed at least in my lifetime. It gives the local communities the ability to increase their police forces by about 20 percent over the course of the next 5 years. It gives local communities the ability to put more serious offenders behind bars. It gives local communities the ability to have prevention programs, education programs, recreation programs, alternatives to imprisonment for young people to give them a better chance at a better future. But all of this depends on what local people do. The President, the Congress, we can't fight crime on the streets; all we can do is give you the tools to make the most of it. But if your churches, your community groups, your community police forces, if they make the most of this, it will lower crime and reduce violence.